

*St. Martin Lane, London 229*  
**A LETTER to a Member of this Parliament,**  
*who was for the Occasional Bill in the Last.*

*SIR, i.e. the bill read 14 Nov. 1702?*  
**Y**OU cannot but know well, upon what account the Test-Act came into so much credit as it hath had with you and others; as if on the Preservation thereof, the Safety of the whole Protestant Religion, and of the Church of England especially does depend. It arose out of doubt from that Essay and Bustle King James made to take it away, who was so earnest in closeting Persons, and in using all the Endeavour he could to get a Parliament to do it, which made us, out of fear, hold it the faster.

It was not for letting in Dissenters into Offices, tho he was for luring all Partys to his aim, but it was for his beloved Papists sake. It was not the imposing the Sacrament according to the Liturgy, but the imposing the Oath of Supremacy, and the renouncing Transubstantiation, upon all Persons permitted to have Offices, that moved him so much for repealing that Act.

There is no such stress therefore to be laid on the Test now, as there was then: Neither are there any now for taking off the Test, to the end King James had in it. We are not for letting Papists into Offices, and bringing Popery into Dominion. We are still for imposing the Oaths of Fidelity to the Queen, and renouncing Transubstantiation, on all that have Offices; but we are against the making the Sacrament to be necessary thereunto. We are not for a total Repeal of that Act, but of that Clause only, and indeed for this reason, because of the Sin and Scandal that is in it.

To do a thing whereby occasion is given to another to sin and ruin his Soul, is properly Scandal. The Test-Act, that makes receiving the Sacrament to be necessary to qualify a Man for Civil and Military Offices, does give occasion to all Persons that have Offices, whether Conformists or Nonconformists, to come to the Sacrament to this end, tho they be never so profane, and never else would come at all; and so they sin, and by eating and drinking their Damnation, ruin their Souls. This Clause therefore of the Test-Act ought to be taken off. *Scandalum est dictum vel factum* (and here is *statutum*, which is *dictum* and *factum*) *minus rectum, præbens alteri* (and here is *præbens multis*) *occasionem ruinæ.*

As for the Occasional Bill which was on foot last Parliament, it had the Title of, *A Bill for preventing Occasional Conformity*, which is this Sin of receiving the Holy Sacrament only for an Office; and there is therefore so much of Religion and the Cause of God in it, as may induce many Members of both Houses (the Bishops especially) to revolve and consider two things that were in it. The one that was pretended, and made the shew: the other which was intended, and in earnest sought.

That pretended, and according to the Title (as I have now said) was the preventing Occasional Conformity, the receiving the Sacrament only for an Office, which is indeed an Evil, and (*quâ* Evil) to be



prevented. And seeing a Pretence hath bin made of it, the righteous God and good Men may expect it, and many of both Houses not endure to have God mocked, and so much shew and stir made, come to nothing. If this Work then be not deceitfully done (which if it be, will bring a Curse) the Sin must be prevented in all Persons, the Conformist as well as Nonconformist, and that can be no otherwise so effectually done, as by taking off the Sacramental Test.

That which was intended, is the excluding Dissenters from Offices, which if it be but fairly offer'd, this one Bill (call'd the Occasional Bill) should be made two, for else no clear and unconfus'd Judgment can pass on the matter. The putting these two things together is such a Consolidation or Tack, as is not to pass (at least with the Lords) in one and the same Bill.

Of these two Bills then, the first should be, *A Bill to prevent the Profanation of the Holy Sacrament* (and by the means, and only means aforesaid) which if it were separately propos'd, would more than probably pass into an Act, because no Christian Lord or Gentleman could find in his heart to allow willingly the Profanation of it, or be unwilling that God should be honour'd, and his Cause prevail. The other should be, *A Bill to prevent the Danger which may arise to the Church or State, in letting Dissenters into Offices*: And the sole Point of Debate here must be whether indeed there be any such Danger as is suppos'd in it? That is, whether it be *E Re publica* (for the good, and most for the good of the Government) that no Persons but such as go always to Church, and never to Meetings, be admitted to Offices, yea or no? If it be made to appear to be, there is a Principle or Ground in Polity, which is the *Supereminens Dominium* that the Supreme Authority of every Nation hath in every thing for the Publick Good, which taking place *de Jure Privatorum*, would justify that Exclusion: But if that cannot be made to appear, there is none else that is sufficient, there is no other.

It is in vain to lay down Axioms of Polity, which are of mens own making, and then argue thereupon. Such are these, *There is a State-Religion in every Nation: And it is fit those only have Offices that are of that Religion*. Therefore the Dissenters in this Kingdom are to have no Offices, but to be turn'd all out. This will not do, Sir; for the Proof arises from such Arguments as are but Feminine, amounting to this only, *It is so*; But why is it? *They say it*: That is, *It is, because it is*.

Let those therefore that have their strong Reasons, bring them forth, and their Experiences (if they have them) to shew that any Prejudice hath befalln the Church or State by the Dissenters being admitted into Offices in all this time, from the first Year of the Reign of King *William* to this fourth Year of the Reign of this Queen, if they can: If they cannot, then let a Bill in God's name be pass'd, that the Sin of *Occasional Conformity* be for ever hereafter prevented. But for the putting any Man whatsoever out of Office without his offending or Cause given, let the Bill be debated, whether it is like to be more a doing wrong, or serving the Publick, and every Member take heed, how he will answer to God and his Neighbour for his Vote. I am,

Nov. 6. 1705.

Sir, Yours, &c.

